U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District  
Mr. Steve Gagnon  
P.O. Box 2946  
Portland, OR 97208-2946

Dear U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

The Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee (ETIC) of the Montana Legislature opposes efforts to expand environmental reviews for port projects proposed in the Pacific Northwest. Increasing exports of U.S. coal is consistent with the goals of the National Export Initiative. However, coal exports are now limited by port capacity in the Pacific Northwest.

With at least two export proposals in the permitting process and other proposals being discussed, the ETIC would like to express its opposition to expanding the environmental reviews already required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is appropriate under NEPA for the Army Corps to prepare individual, site-specific analyses for the individual proposals. A single environmental impact analysis examining all coal export terminal proposals is not needed. Neither NEPA nor the courts require the Army Corps to prepare a single environmental impact statement. Expanding the scope of environmental review beyond the current requirements is unnecessary and will simply delay the permitting process.

If the United States is to retain its international competitiveness as announced with the National Export Initiative, the Corps’ environmental review of pending coal export terminals needs to be completed in a timely manner. These port developments will support the high-paying jobs that the rail and coal industries bring to Montana, as well as the taxes they pay. The projects should not be delayed by unnecessary environmental review. The ETIC respectfully requests that the Army Corps of Engineers follow the law and conduct an environmental review that is specific to the impacts of the port construction.

Sincerely,

Chairman Alan Olson, R-Roundup

cc: Governor Brian Schweitzer  
Senator Max Baucus  
Senator Jon Tester  
Representative Dennis Rehberg